

Teacher Time:
Help Me Calm Down! Teaching Children How to Cope with Their Big Emotions

[Music plays]

Dawn M. Williams: Hello, everyone, and welcome to this month's Teacher Time. We are excited to have you here with us today. Dawn: I'm Dawn Williams.

Kristin Ainslie: I'm Kristin Ainslie.

Dawn: And we are your hosts for Teacher Time. We hope that you enjoyed the opening photo loop there. It featured some of the transition -- pictures of folks doing transition activities that people sent in to us from the last webinar. And when you do that, we have a little gift for you all; so, we hope that you guys continue to do that and will do so for today's topic, too.

Kristin: Yeah, so we are livestreaming, as we have been for the last couple webinars, which is exciting and scary sometimes.

Dawn: Yes.

Kristin: But we're so excited to be doing Teacher Time. So, let us know -- on your screen; there's a couple things. You can see a chat box next to you on your screen. If you have any troubleshooting issues or anything on your end, please chat, and someone on our end can help you through any of those issues that you may be having.

Dawn: That's right. And, also, the Office of Head Start is on Twitter tweeting about Teacher Time. So, you can join the conversation, too, using hashtag (pound sign) NCQTL, and let us know how it's going there. We also have a place for you to register your attendance, and that's where it says: "sign in" right underneath our faces where you see us. From there, you can also opt in to join our Teacher Time community and receive email communications from us, such as announcements and follow-up emails.

And, also, the other link you'll see right below us is the evaluation and certificate link. Towards the end of the webinar, that link will become active, and you can complete an evaluation and tell us how everything went and other ideas you might have for other Teacher Time topics. And then, you will be able to choose if you want a certificate of attendance. But we do need you to actually complete the evaluation to get that certificate, and that will be opened up later in the show.

Kristin: So what -- excuse me. So, what our day is going to look like, today, is that pretty soon, in just a moment, Gail Joseph will join us, and she's going to be giving a presentation today on emotional regulation, helping children calm down after having big feelings -- anger, disappointment -- and some strategies. She's going to share some strategies that teachers can use.

We have another segment next that will be called "Try it Out!," and this segment shows video clips that Dawn and I will be talking about and sharing with you, that shows really amazing strategies that teachers are using in the classrooms around the country in Head Start classrooms.

Dawn: And then, we will also share some resources with you like we do on every Teacher Time show, and we'll -- the links will show up for those in the chat box, so, you can access those that way and we'll include them in our follow-up as well. And then, we'll end with Resiliency and Wellness. I love Resiliency and Wellness. It's a segment where we're trying to focus on some strategies and skills that teachers can use to take care of themselves.

Kristin: Okay, so today our topic, teaching children how to cope with strong emotions and to focus on ways to help them calm down and to handle these emotions when they arise. And, developmentally, we know that 3- and 4-year olds have strong emotions.

Dawn: Yes, they do.

Kristin: That's their job. That's what they do, and we all know that, right?

Dawn: Right.

Kristin: And it's our job then to help them through those big emotions. So, we want to put in prevention strategies to support them, so it really doesn't interrupt the flow of learning.

Dawn: That's right.

Kristin: So, because we have such a lot of you out there, and it's, you know, on camera here, we want to connect with you as much as we can, so we're going to do a poll. We want to know what's happening in your classrooms. So, you're going to see the poll come up on your screen.

Dawn: And the poll question you're going to see is: What percentage of your day do you spend dealing with children's strong emotions in your classroom? Is it around 10 percent, 25 percent, 50 percent, or over 75 percent? While the poll is going on, you'll hear some music, and when it's over, Gail will be here with us.

[Music plays]

Kristin: All right, so it looks like the poll is finished, and it looks like the majority of people, of teachers, of you all, are experiencing children having very strong emotions around 50 percent of their day, which is quite a bit. All right, so we are now back with Gail Joseph, and welcome, Gail. Thank you, so much, for being with us again today.

Gail Joseph: Thank you for having me.

Kristin: What do you think of the results of the poll here?

Gail: Well, I think I'm not surprised, right? So, I was a teacher. You were a teacher. I think this is our experience, as well. A lot of our time, as preschool teachers, is helping children to regulate, to kind of scaffold them around those strong emotions, because 3- and 4-year olds still need some adult coaching to get through. So, I'm not surprised. I know that it feels stressful when we experience that high rate, but I'm not surprised.

Kristin: Right. Okay, good. Well, I am really excited to have Gail here again, today, with us, because she's going to be presenting for you all out there, directly to the needs that you have as teachers in this area, and we are very excited to hear what you have to say, Gail.

Gail: Well, I'm so excited. This is a topic I'm really interested in, certainly, one that I've had a lot of experience working with young children around and so, I'm happy to share some of this. So, I wanted to start and just tell you that there are a couple of resources that I'm going to draw from here. So, a colleague of mine, Phil Strain, and I have written a couple of pieces that I think are up on the resource links there, and, essentially, we reviewed social-emotional curriculum that had an evidence base, and we looked for and pulled out what are the strategies that can be used to really help young children to cope with, to manage, and to express in a healthy way things like anger, disappointment, et cetera.

And there are a couple key points that I want to talk about that come from those resources, and then, I'm going to move into some practical strategies for you. So, one key point to remember when we're thinking about young children and anger and kind of coping with things like disappointment is that it's okay to feel that way. So, when we talk about managing anger or coping with anger, it's not that we think you shouldn't experience that; it's that it's okay to feel that way, but it's not okay to hurt someone. It's not okay to do something that's destructive, that would hurt somebody either physically or hurt their emotions in any way. So, it's okay to feel these ways. It's kind of what we do with them that counts.

But the other thing that we want to take away from those pieces that we wrote, is that staying angry, stressed, or disappointed can certainly interfere with our thinking, with our learning, and having fun. So, staying angry all day long is no fun, right? So, that's another key message.

And then there are some ways, some evidence-based ways, to help children manage these strong emotions and to express them in a healthy way. And I'm going to talk about three that we've uncovered today.

Kristin: Okay, good.

Gail: So, I want to say that it all begins with emotional literacy. And you had me on a couple of months ago where this was the topic, so, hopefully, people will recall this and remember this, and that is that children really need to know the words for feelings, in order to manage them.

They need to have that word, understand what that word means, identify when they're feeling that way, in order to regulate. And so, teaching children a robust, a really large feeling vocabulary is key to this.

Now, there are a couple of words that we might want to introduce to young children that I think we don't always think about introducing, because they seem like kind of adult words here, but teaching young children the words of feeling tense or feeling stressed can be pretty helpful to children, because they experience that and they need the word to -- to be able to express that. So, this is strategy "Number 1," which is this idea of using a relaxation thermometer, and it starts by teaching children this idea of feeling tense or stressed. How does it feel in your body when you feel that way? Even when I see these words, I just start to tense up and feel that way, right? Your shoulder gets tense; your neck gets tense; your jaw gets tense. What makes you feel tense or stressed?

So, we talk about those things with young children. And we know that young children in group care situations experience high levels of stress, so they feel tense or they feel stressed, so, that's something that we want to introduce. Now -- oh, whew, when I see this one, I feel much better.

Kristin: Much better.

Gail: Yes, yes, exactly. So, feeling relaxed. I like to use the word, "calm" here, too, because I think young children hear that a lot, that you need to calm down, but they're not sure what that is or how to get there.

Kristin: Right.

Gail: So, feeling relaxed, feeling calm, feeling content -- what a desirable feeling state to have. So, we also talk about when this occurs for young children. We identify times during the day and say, "Oh, wow, you look so content. You look so relaxed." We set up situations where we can have relaxed moments in our day. So, maybe, it's turning the lights down a little during meal time. Maybe, it's playing some soothing music. For those of you in full daycare, maybe it's right before nap time that's really kind of a relaxed time that we can say, "Wow, you seem so relaxed, so calm, no worries."

So, that is that magical place that we want to be where thinking and learning and having fun can really happen. All right, so then how do we get from feeling tense or stressed to feeling relaxed? So, one of the best ways that we've seen is this idea of using a relaxation thermometer. So, this has been adapted from a social skills curriculum called "The Incredible Years" by Dr. Carolyn Webster-Stratton, who's just so preeminent in this field. But many social skills curriculum have taken this and adapted this and used it in slightly different ways. So, the idea here is that the red moment there, that's the tense or stress. That's the anger. That's the disappointment. Whatever it is where a child or an adult could, you know, kind of lose it, if you will, right; that's where it's difficult to think straight; that's where it's difficult for us to solve our problems, and it's not a very fun place to be. That's red.

Blue, that's where we want to be. That's feeling relaxed. That's feeling content. That's feeling calm for children. And then, all the colors in between are really all the different emotions we might experience in between going from feeling calm and content to getting really angry. And what we want to do for young children is really grow the number of words that they know, and young children really like to associate the feeling words with the colors. They can get into that. It works really well for them about feeling in the blue, feeling in the green, those kinds of things.

So, how do we do that? If we're starting to approach that red moment, how do we get ourselves back down into that blue? So, one of the best ways to do that is by taking some deep breaths. So, we often say three deep breaths. There's not something magical about the number three. The idea here is that we want children to calm down, to concentrate on their breathing, to kind of take away, to not be concerned about what they're angry about, what they're worried about, what they're stressed about, but instead to just think about their breath. We have a way to help teach young children how to take deep breaths, because if you tell a 4-year-old to take three deep breaths when they're upset, they're going to hyperventilate; so, we don't want to do that.

Kristin: Right.

Gail: So how can we help them? Taking a deep breath -- here's a nice visual. So, we use this. Smell the flowers...[inhales deeply] and then, [exhales] blow out the candle. And that helps young children to understand that it's taking that deep breath in through the nose [inhaling] and then out through the mouth. [exhaling] And this little mantra of smell the flowers, blow out the candle can start to take them into their breath and away from what's making them angry or stressed, and pretty soon, they're feeling calm. We've even brought little tiny, you know, flowers out at circle time and little birthday cake candles -- not lit, okay?

So, just little candles, but just to kind of visualize that for young children. Something that we need to practice when we're calm. It's not something that you want to pull out as soon as there's a tantrum happening, right? You want to practice this and teach this when they're calm, so it's more likely that they're going to be able to do this when they're feeling upset.

This is just another little thing I brought. Hopefully, the camera can pick this up. This is a Hoberman sphere. This is another great way to help young children think about visualizing taking that deep breath, right? So, taking it in... [inhales] filling your lungs, filling your belly, [exhales] and breathing it out, just another strategy.

Kristin: Okay. I love it.

Gail: Okay. Young children can make relaxation thermometers. They can decorate them. They can talk about how they feel at different times. You can start building their emotional vocabulary in that way, as well. What we're going to watch right now is we're going to actually watch a little video where -- this comes from some work that Carolyn Webster-Stratton has done, as well, in a Head Start classroom. And we worked with this teacher on using the relaxation thermometer with young children, and this is a little boy who feels a little disappointed, because he doesn't get a sticker. Now, for this little boy, disappointment is the red moment for him. So, let's watch how this teacher uses some emotional coaching and how this child also brings in this new strategy that he's learned at this moment.

Kristin: Okay, good.

Gail: All right.

[Video begins]

Teacher: Congratulations. Keep up the good work. Okay? Okay. All right, let's go.

Boy: [Inaudible]

Teacher: You what?

Boy: I wanted a sticker.

Teacher: Oh, really?

Child: Yeah.

Teacher: Hurt your feelings? You're feeling a little disappointed? Oh, that's a problem. Oh, he's taking a deep breath. Look at -- Louise, Simeron is taking a deep breath, because he said he was feeling a little disappointed. That's a great solution. All right. Feeling better? That's great. I'm glad. All right. Ooh, and there's a friend. A friend comes to your rescue. That's great.

[Video ends]

Gail: All right, so I just want to comment on that video for just a moment. So, an incredible Head Start teacher in action there. She does a lovely job of really kind of coaching this child through. She -- you know, she talks about, "Wow, you were disappointed, huh?" She gives him that feeling word for him. And that's really a signal for him to take those [inhales] deep kind of exaggerated breaths, which is really lovely to see. And then the peer comes in to support. She doesn't just hand him a sticker, which I think a lot of us maybe would have done had we not known this other strategy to do, right? So, anyway, so she is wonderful. Kudos to her. Just great job coaching that little boy through. And now he's got this skill that he can take with him.

Kristin: Yeah.

Gail: That's excellent. So, let's talk about two more strategies. I'm going to try and get through two more quick little strategies that we can use to help manage anger and handle disappointment for young children. So, one thing that we want to help young children understand is that when you're feeling really, really, really angry, it's not the time to start solving your problem, because anger can actually interfere with your thinking. It's going to cloud your judgment. It's going to make you maybe not come up with the best solutions to get your needs met.

Another key thing is to recognize anger in yourself and others. So, you need to also understand when you're feeling angry. What are those signs? And then, I'm going to talk about two techniques, one is called "Dragon Brain" and one's called the "Turtle Technique," that we can use to help children manage that.

So, just really quickly, this is a little activity that also comes from Carolyn Webster-Stratton's work where it's called "Feeling Fingerprints." And what we've done is we've traced children's bodies, down at the bottom of that screen there, and we've added -- you know, they get to decorate them -- and then, we've had them kind of identify with these stickers. It's probably hard to see, but we've, actually, given them stickers that say: "Mad" or "anger" -- whatever. And we want them to think about on their body where do they start to feel that. And kids are pretty good. They're like in my jaw, in my -- you know, my brow, because it get furrowed, in my hands, because they start to make fists. But, essentially, what this is is priming them to understand that, "Gosh, when I start to feel that way, that's a signal to me that I should probably calm down before I start to solve problems."

Another way we've done this for young children is introducing this concept of Dragon Brain. So, what the heck is this? So, Dragon Brain is this idea -- this is a way we can communicate to young children that when you get so angry, it's kind of like a dragon takes over, and the dragons are like -- they're big; they're fierce, and the only thing they can do is blow smoke on things, make things kind of worse, right? That's the way that the -- kind of the imagery that we bring up there. And that dragons have just like these little teeny tiny brains, right?

So, we talk about when you're feeling angry, you might get this dragon brain and you can't think of a lot of good solutions there. So, here we just give some visuals. I know you're going to talk about these a little bit later. So, something happens; you get angry; you get Dragon Brain. Uh oh. But then, you remember to calm down, flower in and the candle, smelling the flower, blowing out the candle, calming down, and now ready to play again. All right, so that's an idea that can help young children understand that idea. And you can start using that, words like, "Oh, I'm thinking I'm getting Dragon Brain. I better calm down first. All right, now I can proceed, right?"

Kristin: I love that. Okay, that's great.

Gail: Okay, one more quick strategy, and this is Turtle Time. Now, I'm, guessing that a lot of people know Turtle Time out there. This is something that is also in a lot of social and emotional curricula, and this is something that is also featured on the Center for Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning website and something, also, in the resources that we mentioned earlier about the helping young children to calm down.

So Turtle Technique. So, really quickly, this is the idea: We have a wise old turtle here who's going to help us with his secret. All right? And so here's our little turtle. This is Tiny. You might have another name for him. In one classroom I worked in it was Clyde. [Kristin laughs]

Gail: Whatever works, right?

Kristin: I love that.

Gail: It can be Clyde. So, step 1 is something happens and I'm going to have Tiny actually tell this story; so, here's Tiny.

(speaking in Tiny's voice) Well, you know, I was just having a great time out on the playground. I was playing with my friends; I was feeling great, and then all of a sudden, a ball hit me. Oh, I started to get mad. I was feeling tense and my -- making fists, and my jaw was tense, and I remembered the wise turtle secret. I thought, "Stop," and I went into my shell...[breathes in deeply] and I took three deep breaths, and I said to myself, "It's okay. Maybe, it was an accident, and I can calm down." And when I was feeling calm again, I came out, and the light bulb went on, and I had lots of solutions. Mm-hmm.

Gail: [regular voice] So, that's Tiny. Thanks, Tiny, for coming out. And Tiny can really help young children to start to really think about that way. So, when we teach young children Tiny Turtle, we actually give them some turtle things to use. So, we take some paper bags sometimes and make their own little kind of turtle shells. So, here's one that was decorated by a preschooler, and you see that she's copied the letters for the word "stop," and that's the hardest thing to do, so we really like to emphasize that.

We get to practice wearing our turtle shells, thinking about things that might make us angry, or a time we felt angry and then we go into our shell. Now, when young children first learn this strategy, they're actually going to physically go into their shell, and that's good, because if I'm doing this, I'm not doing this, right?

Kristin: Right, right, right, right.

Gail: And so this is a great way to get children to kind of calm themselves down at the beginning, taking those three deep breaths, and emerging ready to solve your problems.

Kristin: Oh, so happy.

Gail: And I know I'm out of time here. I'm just going to end with one little great little thing here. This comes from a classroom where the teacher was working really hard to really not only teach and support but reinforce when children could use Turtle Power, and that's kind of the words she used.

Kristin: Turtle Power!

Gail: Yeah, right? Like you are strong and powerful, when you can be calm. Any old person can hit, kick, whatever, but it takes special power to stay calm, and that's what she was able to teach her children. And then, what she did -- these are little paper turtles with kids' names on them. Every time somebody demonstrated Turtle Power, she would write their name on a turtle. There'd be a big to-do about it. They'd put it up on the Turtle Power little kind of meter there, and when it got to the top, when they had a full turtle stack, they had a celebration. So, lots of fun ways you can think about reinforcing turtle technique and Turtle Power. Thanks, so much for having me.

Kristin: Thank you so much, Gail. I'm just going to -- we're going to talk about some of these things. I'm just going to go through here. So, yes, thank you very much. So, in a moment, Dawn will be back with us as we talk about Try it Out!, and we're going to show some emotion coaching video examples.

Gail: Great.

[Music plays]

Kristin: Hi, everybody. Welcome. Dawn back with us. We are in our next segment now, which is called, "Try It Out!" We're going to show you some videos that show teachers using emotion coaching strategies in their classrooms.

Dawn: That's right. So, we are going to show you four video clips. The first set is a -- we call it a teacher montage or mash-up of teachers actually teaching emotional coaching strategies in the classroom. As Gail was just talking about, you have to take the time to actually teach these things when children are calm. So, we have some video examples of that, and hopefully, there will be some things you see some things you see in there that you could try out. And then, the next three examples will be some of the emotional coaching strategies in action.

Kristin: So, yes, as Dawn said, the first clip you're going to see three videos strung together, and these are all strategies that Gail has talked about just a moment ago -- strategies that we want to teach children at a calm time, when they are able to think about what we're saying, we're able to maybe do some role-play.

Dawn: Right.

Kristin: And so this is sort of the pre-teaching what we want to have happen in classrooms, and we're going to show the first video now.

[Video begins]

Teacher: And it looks like they're both having strong feelings. Remember, when you have strong feelings: What do we do?

Girl: [Not audible]

Teacher: We use our calm-down rules. We put our hands on our tummy. Let's practice calming down. Put our hands on our tummy, say stop.

Boy: Stop.

Teacher: And then, name your feeling. I'm feeling frustrated. Remember that word?

Girl: Yeah.

Teacher: When you have to wait for your turn or you have to wait to share. "I feel frustrated," or "I'm feeling mad or sad," and then belly breaths.

Teacher: Okay, there you go. Now, we're going to zigzag it to the right, to the left slow, slow like a caracole, like a little tiny snail that goes very slowly. We want to slow down our neurons. Good job.

Teacher (in doll's voice): Now, I am really mad! (in normal voice) Hey, what should Eddie do when he's mad? Do you guys want to give him an idea? What should he do? Right, hey, Eddie, check out Marilyn. She's breathing -- kind of fast -- but she's breathing. [Breathes in and out loudly]

Teacher: (in Eddie's voice) Oh, kids, I think I'm ready.

Dawn: So, in this clip you saw three different examples of teachers showing different ways that children can -- teaching children a calm-down strategy. So, in that first one, you saw the teacher reviewing some different strategies. She talked about belly breathing, and so the children could say how that they were feeling and so they can refer to it in the moment. So, they have a visual reminder for that. Then, there's also the practice of breathing and stretching and relaxation. I would like to relax like a snail right now.

Kristin: I like that.

Dawn: That would be lovely to be able to do that. And once that's practiced, it provides children with some tools to try to calm down. So, maybe they will remember breathing. Maybe, they will remember to stretch and take a break like that. And then, you saw the puppet, which we saw Gail demonstrate, beautifully.

Kristin: I know. I love that.

Dawn: That was fantastic. But, you know, one of the benefits of using a puppet is that sometimes big, strong emotions can be easier to demonstrate with a puppet, instead of having a child do some of that. So, now you've seen two great examples of how to do that.

Kristin: Excellent. So, the next clip you're going to see does not have any audio with it, so, don't worry that your computer -- something went wrong. We're just going to see the technique that Gail talked about of smelling the flower and blowing out the candle, and you'll see that it's pretty clear that this teacher has already taught this little boy how to use this strategy, and she's just supporting him in this strategy. There was something that happened in an activity; he went to take a break with the teacher, and then, he gets to go back to the class after doing the breathing.

[Video begins] [No audio]

[Video ends]

Dawn: So, here was the smell the flower, blow out the candle calming-down strategy in action. So, it's clear that this little boy has been taught the strategy before and the teacher's helping him to recall it, and you see how he can successfully rejoin the group after that; so it's nice to see how in the midst of everything that's going on in a classroom, this, you know, can be pulled off.

Kristin: Absolutely. So, the next clip you're going to see is a teacher who's using some visual supports to help a little boy. And this is an outside activity. The little boy, again, has -- something has happened, and the little boy has left the activity. The teacher is going to use some visual supports from CSEFEL to help him talk through his emotions and try to sort of get to the bottom of what happened with him.

[Video begins]

Teacher: Wow, there were lots of rocks, yeah. How is Robbie feeling now?

Boy: Icky. This one.

Teacher: Oh, my goodness! Are you mad or happy?

Boy: Mad.

Teacher: Mad. What are you mad about?

Boy: [Inaudible]

Teacher: Oh, you're mad when you get home and something about that. We're working on using words, and I like how you communicating that.

[Video ends]

Dawn: So, there're a number of great things that this teacher is doing. She's building on the child's emotional literacy. And, you know, one of the things that Gail pointed out in her in her presentation was that strong emotions can interfere with your -- with thinking clearly, and the teacher recognizes that. It's really hard to think clearly when you're upset.

Kristin: Right.

Dawn: And so, using a visual can help facilitate the child's expression of that emotion a little bit more easily. And then, also, having these visuals can help with children who might have a speech and language disorder, because it provides them with a tool to communicate where it might just make it a little bit easier to do that.

Kristin: Absolutely. Okay, our last clip that we're going to show today is our big finale here, right? So, this is a teacher and a child. The little boy is quite upset at snack time, which this will be no surprise to you. This happens all the time in classrooms, and what we really love is how hard the teacher works and the child. The teacher has various strategies that he's going to use with this little boy to help him in this moment and help him to calm down.

[Video begins]

Andy: Ahhhh! You stop that!

Teacher: Andy, it's not a big deal, okay?

Andy: I said, stop!

Teacher: All right, Andy, check it out.

Andy: [Inaudible]

Teacher: Look. "I need to keep my hands and legs to myself."

Andy: Have to hug.

Teacher: And a calm voice.

Andy: I need to hug.

Teacher: Look, can you show me a calm voice like this? [Breathing deeply] Let's do one more. [Breathing deeply]

Andy: I need some help.

Teacher: What do you need help with, Andy?

Andy: With that.

Teacher: Yeah, you can use a calm voice and say, "Please stop."

Andy: Please stop.

[Video ends]

Dawn: So, you know, as you mentioned, one of the things I love about this clip is how hard the teacher and the little boy are trying. And, you know, here at QTL, we just can't thank all the teachers who've allowed us to come into their classrooms and film this. And there are so many shining examples of teachers using great strategies and all of these clips reflect that. So, this child is clearly upset, and he is doing his best to stay calm, while he's saying, "I need help, I need help." Like someone has been working with him on that. And the teacher stays calm through the whole thing and has a social story to talk through.

Kristin: Yeah. And he really has three things really, that he talks to him about. He uses a visual support. It's called a social story, a little social story, a story about what Andy can do. He does modeling deep breathing for Andy at the snack table and he also gives him words to say. "Please stop," right? So, instead of maybe a month ago the little boy might've gotten up from the snack table, now he's in his seat; he's using strategies, and he's able to continue on with the activity.

Dawn: That's right. Okay, so hopefully, there were some new ideas or strategies you got out of that Try it Out! section. What we're trying to do there is give you things you could do the next time you have the opportunity in the classroom.

And now we're going to transition to sharing some resources with you. And we know, as we were going through the presentation, you might've seen a few of those, but they are from the Head Start Center for Inclusion, the Center for Social and Emotional Foundations in Early Learning and NCQTL.

Kristin: So, this resource right here -- and you have had the links come up in your chat and we will also send all of this in a follow-up document, so don't worry, if you're not copying it down right at the moment, but Head Start Center for Inclusion has many, many visuals to use to just download, to use in your classroom. This is, again, the Dragon Brain story. You can have it large. You can have it small. You can send it home with children. It also has some really great, great photos -- or, sorry, drawings of ideas that children can use when they're feeling these big, strong emotions, right? So, they can bounce a ball, they can blow bubbles. Sometimes children forget what they can do, so posting these in the classroom is a really great way to remind them.

Dawn: And then on CSEFEL's website is the Turtle Technique, and so there's some visuals and some actual directions for how you can use that in your classroom. And then we also -- This is the house. It's the NCQTL Framework for Effective Practice, and not all of the resources we have here at QTL are up on the ECLKC yet. Some of them are available -- well, all the rest of them are available in the Foundation In-Service box set.

Now, this is available to all the grantees and you get it through your ECE specialist, and there's three suites in particular that relate to what we're talking about here today in the Building Relationships section. It's Fostering Connections, Being Aware of Children's Needs, and Creating a Caring Classroom Community you might find particularly helpful.

Kristin: Excellent.

Dawn: All right, so we are going to take a short break with another poll. We want to find out, if you were watching in a group, how many people are watching with you? Really helps us to figure out who's out there in our teacher-land audience, and when we come back, Gail and I will return.

[Music plays]

Dawn: Hi, Gail.

Gail: Hi.

Dawn: It is Resiliency & Wellness time. I love this segment. I feel like I should be laying down on a couch or something. This is such a great idea you had for the segment every time, because we get to tell teachers something that they can do to take care of themselves and focus on that, to try and, you know, make things a little bit easier in their lives.

Gail: Well, we have seen examples of incredible teachers. We have a lot of incredible teachers that are tuning in, right now, and so, of course, we need something to help them as well, right?

Dawn: That's right.

Gail: So it's hard work that we do when we're teachers. And so resiliency and wellness, we're learning more and more all the time about the connection between our own resiliency and wellness and our ability to effectively teach and to help young children with their social and emotional development. So, I wanted to introduce a new kind of idea for us here, and that is this strategy of identifying or being mindful of when we're having some unhelpful thoughts and spin them to make them more positive and helpful.

Dawn: Okay.

Gail: So we think all the time. We just like, you know, get caught in these thought storms. We're thinking, thinking, thinking, and so, what I'm going to encourage us to do is to stop once in a while and to be mindful of how we're thinking about a situation, and if that thinking is something that is positive and helpful and going to help us to reach our goals, to proceed positively, to feel good and relax, or if it's actually unhelpful and perhaps stopping our ability to reach our goal or to proceed positively.

Dawn: Okay.

Gail: So, the big key message here is that thoughts, feelings, and the way we act are all connected very intimately. It's kind of this cycle that happens. And the way that we're going to think about a situation - so, remember, we're thinking all the time. We want to be mindful of how we're thinking about that situation, because the way we think about it can affect the way we feel about it, and the way we feel about it, again, affects our thinking, which then affects our behavior. It's all connected.

Dawn: Right.

Gail: And so, where it starts is that thinking about the situation. So, it's being mindful about those thoughts. And I like to think about this. I borrowed this from some other scholars in resiliency where they think about kind of red light thoughts and green light thoughts and this has helped me a lot, so I thought I would share it.

Dawn: Great.

Gail: So, red light thoughts are those thoughts that are going to start -- that we're going to notice are unhelpful, maybe negative thoughts that are going to affect the way we feel about the situation and affect the way that we behave, and that, perhaps, are not the ways that are going to help us proceed positively or meet our goals. Green thoughts are going to be more helpful. They're going to affect us, the way that we're feeling, in a more positive way, and you'll see that we can proceed more positively. I'm going to actually put up a situation here, just as an illustration. This doesn't maybe necessarily have something directly to do with teaching, but we all know from teaching that things outside in our lives really can affect the way that we're -- how we're behaving in the classroom, if you will.

So, here's a situation that I know I'm very familiar with; it can be a really stressful one. So, you're trying to save money, you have this goal to save money. That's your goal, and you manage to save just a little, but all of a sudden you got this big bill to pay that you forgot about. And so, if I have some red light thinking here, my thinking might be, "Well, this is hopeless." Right? "I'm never going to save any money. You know, I just got some, and there it goes. It's going to be awful." Clearly, if I'm thinking that way, I'm going to feel sad and maybe even depressed about that. And how am I going to behave? Probably just give up. Saving's not for me. It's not going to work, right? And I'm going to continue the cycle of feeling stressed.

Let's change to our green light thinking, right? I'm going to be mindful and think, "Wow, that's not very helpful. Let's get a green light thought here." Green light thought might be, "Hey, it's a little setback. I can be a little bit more aware of this. I can figure out how I forgot it, but it's a little setback. It's not the end." And then how am I going to feel about that? I'm going to feel okay and hopeful about the future. Very different than feeling sad and depressed. And then, I'm going to behave in a way that's going to help me to think about how I can work through this and work it out, right? I mean, another green light thought might be, "Thank goodness I saved a little money for this bill," right?

Dawn: That's right.

Gail: That's another way to think about. Okay. Let's think about something that might be even more familiar to us, which is you just received some feedback from your supervisor, after maybe you had a class observation done, and the message that you get is that you -- you know, there's some improvement needed.

Dawn: That happens.

Gail: All right, happens a lot. So, let's check in with how we're thinking about it. So, a red light thought might be, "Well, I think this means I'm not a good teacher." Might be a red light thought, right?

Dawn: Yeah.

Gail: That's going to stop us from proceeding positively, because it's going to make us feel maybe a little ashamed and worried and the way we might behave in that situation is, "Hey, I'm not going to try very hard. What the point, right? I'm not -- you know, just not a good teacher." So, let's change that. So, I'm mindful. I just get this feedback. I'm mindful that, "Ah, I'm starting to have some red light thoughts here." What can I do? I can spin it to be a green light thought, which is, "Hey, I demonstrated some strengths in there. I know I love teaching, and I've got some areas to grow." How might I feel about that? Well, I'm going to maybe still feel a little disappointed, to be realistic, but I'm also going to think, "Hey, I feel inspired to improve my teaching because I know I can do it. I have some strengths. I love to do this work, and I can get better."

And then how am I going to behave? I'm going to ask my supervisor how I can improve and how they can help me with that. So, again, that just checking in, "Gosh, is it -- am I having some red light thinking here or some green light thinking here?" And I think if we all start thinking this way, we can help each other out. So, you know, you hear me complaining or something; you can say: "Well, that seems like some kind of red light thinking going on there. Let's spin it to be green light thinking." So, it's just something to help us be mindful. And the great thing is that there's traffic lights all over the place, and so that's always just a reminder, "Hey, let me check in with how I'm thinking about it." Something to practice when we're calm, and more likely to come to us when we're feeling upset.

Dawn: Oh, gosh, that's so helpful, because thinking feeling, and behaving are all things that we can control, and we can do something about it and help each other with some more green thoughts.

Gail: That's right, that's right.

Dawn: All right, thank you, Gail, for that.

Gail: Thanks, so much.

Dawn: And I'm sure that you all definitely got something from that, and Kristin's going to be back with me in just a moment, for some closing thoughts.

[Music plays]

Dawn: All right, so this brings us to the end of our time today. We've got just a few reminders for you. Join us next month, on February 21st for our next Teacher Time show. And also, we really would love to hear from you all about, you know, any activities or photos you might have of doing calming-down strategies or pictures of children doing that or ideas you use in your classroom to help children calm down from their strong emotions. So, please send those in to us to ncqtl@uw.edu, and we love to feature the good work that we know that's going on out there, and when you do, we'll have a little gift for you.

Kristin: Yes, we will rave about you. We promise. We really want to know what's happening in your classroom. So, you may also join us on Twitter: NCQTL, the hashtag, #NCQTL. You can tweet about what's happening and what you see here going on and what's coming up. And please also remember to sign in, if you have not signed in yet. That will be -- there is an evaluation form and a certificate that you will receive. But every single person needs to sign in and fill out the evaluation in order to get their certificate. We were noticing on here how many people are watching together, and we love that, but the evaluation and the sign-in will be open for another hour, so, you will have plenty of time for everyone to fill that out. We know you want to get your certificates and follow-up.

Dawn: And don't worry if you missed anything -- you were frantically taking notes -- we'll be sending out a follow-up document that summarizes what we covered today, and we'll also include all the resources. So, thanks for joining us.

Kristin: Thank you, everyone. We'll see you next month.

[Music plays]